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SUGGESTIONS FROM A CONVERT

Arthur Heiserman

TOWARDS A LIVING FAITH

Rev. Francis Somerville, S.J.

APPROACH TO THE ACT OF FAITH

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162
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IT SEEMS TO ME

Religion in the U. S. A.

Religion in our country still continues to win the increasing attention of our fellow citizens.

The latest testimonial to this fact is the extensive study issued by the American Academy of Political and Social Science. In the November, 1960 issue of the organization's *Annals*, 13 writers contribute reports on this topic. Richard D. Lambert, sociologist and assistant editor of this publication, remarks: "The tone is optimistic, much more optimistic than would have been anticipated several decades ago."

Some significant features of this continued concern with the relevance of religion are: the expanding and deepening of the involvement of the laity in the numerous concerns of the Church; the growing interest of various Christians in "Religious Dialogue" with a view to greater understanding and charity across denominational lines; a more extensive recognition of the importance of systematic theology; and the renewed respect of the intellectual community in all that concerns religion.

All this is reflected in increased church membership. In 1910, church membership of those over 13 years of age was 55 per cent of our population. By 1940, this figure had dropped to 50.7 per cent. In 1950, the figure had risen to 63.7. And it is the opinion of the writers that there has been a continuing increase in the last decade.

The writers are less enthusiastic regarding the depth of some elements in this revival, which they characterize as "pious utilitarianism," "peace of mind cults" or mere "faith in faith." In spite of the encouraging statistics and healthy elements, the revival undoubtedly manifests much that is shallow and superficial.

Yet Will Herberg, a severe critic of modern "religiosity," also discerns among many people a profound search for the "meaning of existence" and even "commitment"; and reminds us that God "is capable of turning even the superficialities of contemporary religion into an instrument of His redemptive purpose."

JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

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Suggestions From A Convert

By Arthur Heiserman

A sign of the growing maturity of the Apostolate to non-Catholics is our increasing concern with the content of our instructions and our method of presenting them. Mr. Heiserman is a professor at the University of Chicago who was received into the Church in 1955. His talk was given at a panel discussion during the Conference on Adult Catechetics, Chicago, 1960.

I shall assume that while taking instructions the "convert"—the man who has been moved to turn himself—exchanges some of his ignorance for knowledge. But his ignorance is often vaguer, more elusive, than either he or his instructor realizes. Both can foresee that discussion will illuminate the doctrines of the Holy Trinity, and the proper definition of the Immaculate Conception. But the convert, at his first "official" encounter with the Church, frequently possesses an ignorance of which neither he nor his guide is aware.

It is on this second, unrecognized area of ignorance, that I wish to concentrate. To discuss it I shall put back on my catechumenal robes, now barely five years old, and so take the risk of playing the stock comic role of the fresh convert—the "sensitive soul" type of intellectual whom I represent. My report on what I recollect of my instructions will be in two parts: I shall begin with what I remember of my knowledge, and go on to what I remember of my ignorance.

In the first place, I knew that I wanted very much to practice the Roman Catholic religion. I am not certain why I knew this, and it would not now be pertinent for me to conjecture reasons. But my knowledge was so strong that I felt that my decision to take instructions was a decision to accept almost anything my instructor might say. Now, this attitude must be rather common. I was not, like the agnostic fiancée of a Catholic friend of mine, prepared to affirm that there were nine gods and that the name of each was Allah; but St. Peter's hook was firmly in my jaw.

Thus, no rhetoric was necessary for me. In fact, for people of my sort, instructions may be a kind of waiting period preparatory to baptism, a procedure not to discover whether the Church is the "right religion" for them but one in which to discover whether they are worthy of the Church. When he spots such a convert, the instructor might gauge when this waiting period has gone on long enough, rather than march straight through the catechism. (I was not a member of a class; and we used the Baltimore Catechism.) Furthermore, I knew from teaching that each class has its character, and there might be a time when it has had enough of the catechism and might profit from history and literature. In short, each individual, and even each class, might be allowed to set its own pace.

Again, I knew the basic tenets of Christianity. My instructions, in my early teens, in the Evangelical and Reformed Church had been positive. But I knew very little theology, in spite of my intellectual interests. I was attracted to the writings of Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Jacques Maritain, Chesterton, C. S. Lewis, and so on; the art and music of the Church had also drawn me to it. But I knew, even before taking instructions, that while such magnetic expressions of faith might draw one toward the Church, they cannot by themselves hold one in it. I suppose it was the reading of Reinhold Niebuhr's *Nature and Destiny of Man* that brought me to the edge of my decision, so that I am perhaps like the movie projectionist who having watched the film *Martin Luther* several dozen times determined to enter the Roman Catholic Church.

I suspect that for some converts from Protestantism (and more particularly from Judaism) coming to seek instructions is a guilty act—a rejection of parents and past life. This would make them shy, inarticulate, and make the first session crucial. It can be a terrible time, when one enjoys neither the comforts of neutral agnosticism nor those of a blatant rejection of Christianity. To help allay any such feelings of isolation and guilt, the instructor might seat his group in a circle, get them to talk without fully disclosing themselves, by asking questions which they can answer impersonally. The sound of their own voices might comfort them.

Now for my ignorance. What I did not know may be typical of the ignorance of many Protestants. And it takes form in attitudes of which a man reared as a Catholic may not be aware.

I had never known a priest. They were so outside my experience that I had no means of responding to them, much less engaging in easy dialogue with them. I'm not quite sure what I expected of them, but I think I wanted them to be aloof, ascetic, even somewhat inhuman. All the Protestant ministers I had met had been "good guys"; therefore, since I had no idea of the variety of religious callings, I expected Catholic priests to behave like cloistered religious. It dismayed me to see them driving cars, especially good cars.

Now this attitude is, I think, typical of a certain class of converts, a class for whom the behavior of the priest is of crucial importance. For me, the priest *was* the Church in quite a different sense than my Catholic friends were the Church. Of course, while some people might be confused by the joviality of a consecrated person, others might be put off by his austerity. I suspect that an instructor might do well to watch out for both attitudes, or at least be aware that many people have experienced nothing to provide them with habitual responses for an encounter with a priest.

I knew nothing of the Church in its "worldly" aspect. The structure of the hierarchy, of the orders, or the role of the laity in church affairs, were more mysterious to me than the doctrine of the Mystical Body. The ingrown Protestantism of many converts makes them very curious to know how the Church, into whose mystical community they are seeking admission, is governed.

This is not in the catechism. Like so many other matters, it is what the cradle Catholic acquires by osmosis. And as I came aware of my ignorance, it made me suspicious. I wasn't worried in the slightest about "Franco Spain," or "the crimes of the Papacy"; I had selfish answers for these problems which so worried my contemporaries. But I grew into a state of mind—a state that must be very common—where minutiae grew to vast importance.

For example, I could never get used to the sound of change jingling in church after collection, a sound very audible to the shy convert seated in the back of church. One day an usher spilled a fistful of coins right behind me. I hope you can realize my dismay when a half-dollar rolled into my pew and lay down at my foot. Remember, at any Mass, you may have such a sensitive soul in the back of your church; he doesn't understand the finances of the Church; he may even be listening very closely to you in the pulpit, hoping to hear some sort of "mistake," some sign of prejudice or "money-grubbing" that would relieve him of his embarrassing urge to come talk to you. Such a prospective convert can't think of money realistically in connection with the Church.

Therefore the instructor might explain, perhaps as he examines the sources of the Church's authority, *how* the Church lives in the world, even how it is sometimes subject to the corruptions of the world, through its human weaknesses. Some people, of course, will wonder out loud about the scope of its political role, for instance; but others will sit silently and nurse irrational suspicions. Better to bring them out into the open.

Many persons not reared in the bosom of the Church are confused by her devotions to the saints and Our Blessed Mother. Many of them are less attracted to such structured activities as the Forty Hours devotion, even to the rosary, than to what seem to them more simplistic, unadorned agencies of grace. For some, reared in the Anglo-Saxon culture of reticence, the very language of popular devotions seems alien, since their earlier prayers (if any) had not come into English from Latin or Italian. Now, this may seem a very small matter indeed, but it is precisely such small matters which, while remaining invisible to the born Catholic, determine so much of the Protestant's attitude toward the Church. Of course, after a while the convert's ear and mind grow ac-

customed to these devotions as he discovers them to be valid for him personally. But I suggest that the instructor might do well not to play upon them heavily too early.

Finally, I did not know that Catholics would not know, or understand, my ignorances. What I've said so far boils down to two points: I was ignorant of the most common kind of knowledge—of what the "worldly" Church was and how she daily prayed; and neither I nor my Catholic friends were aware of this ignorance. I was expected to be ignorant of the contents of the catechism, and in many points I was; but it was assumed, perhaps, that I knew what every Catholic schoolboy knows. I thought that all Catholics believed alike at all points: I was ignorant of the scope of opinion, and the dimensions of the Catholic universe of discourse. For example, I was perhaps not even aware that for Catholics the Pope could be *both* the Vicar of Christ on earth *and* a human being—I thought that they believed he was some sort of a demi-god, and *they* didn't know that I thought this. Luckily, this kind of ignorance can easily be dispelled; the trick is discovering it. Allow me to recommend that instructors spend some effort in digging out these attitudes so that they may correct them.

Permit me also to recommend the following points:

(1) Appreciate the difficulties the convert experiences in opening himself to a new kind of clerical personage.

(2) Imagine the variety and depth of the *little* ignorances embedded in a Protestant.

(3) To meet both these situations, employ the "Socratic" method where appropriate. For example, the instructor might contend that a point of doctrine is absurd and force his class to defend it. In such an exchange, ignorance might be revealed and the convert himself will take the side of the truth.

(4) To aid in all three of the above matters, a lay person, preferably a convert whose feet have returned to the ground, might be in the room. Not only would he serve as a witness, but perhaps the class might address certain questions to him. Both he and the priest might recommend appropriate books of fiction, history, apologetics to individual members of the class.

(5) Finally, to aid all the above, an "occasion" might be devised which would bring all inquiry classes in the diocese together. I recall being astonished at seeing the number of a year's crop of adult converts filling Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago. As the catechumen sees a crowd of his fellows, he thinks that perhaps he's not such a stock comic character after all.

"A good teacher teaches well rather than much; it might be argued that the best pedagogue conveys only a few convictions, but they *are* convictions, and they are powerful convictions. The apt pupil may thus learn comparatively little; only enough to change his own life. Such an expert teacher is Holy Mother Church. She does not at all mind being tiresome. She repeats certain first truths over and over again, knowing well that *the frailty* of man can at least be depended upon to forget what is primary and overlook what is obvious and especially to resent repetition of what is crucial and decisive."

VINCENT P. McCORRY, S.J.

Towards A Living Faith

By Rev. Francis Somerville, S.J.

I. OUR AIM

The purpose of Christian education, according to the now classic definition given by Pope Pius XI is "to co-operate with Divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian." It is a supernatural work, beyond the powers of human effort, and yet in God's designs requiring the joint work of human agents. As we are considering children already baptized, it is not a question of making them Christians, for they are that already, but of helping immature Christians to live a fully Christian life.

Faith is at the root of everything in the Christian life. In baptism the child receives the virtues of faith, hope and charity, which express the threefold essential relationship of the Christian with God. Of these three faith is the most fundamental, for it is by faith that we know God to be our Father and highest good whom we love above all things—which is charity; because we believe what he has told us about his plan of salvation we are confident that he will bring us to himself in heaven—which is the virtue of hope.

It follows from this that basically our specific task as religious educators is to foster and develop faith in our pupils.

Father Somerville is director of the Catholic Catechetical Centre in London. We reprint his article with his permission. It appeared in the January and in the April, 1960 issues of *The Sower*. While his remarks are primarily addressed to those who catechize Catholic children, his advice is equally necessary for those who teach non-Catholic inquirers.

But we must have a right view of faith. This caution is necessary, because for a long time there has prevailed an impoverished notion which accounts in large measure for one of the great weaknesses in our religious teaching, namely the imparting of a body of doctrine almost unrelated to daily living, with the result that the pupils may well know their religion but not live it.

If asked what faith is, we would probably answer in the words of the catechism: it is a supernatural gift of God by which we firmly believe without doubting whatever God has revealed. On that definition faith is an intellectual assent to God's revealed truths. Faith is, indeed, believing what God has revealed; the teaching of the Church is explicit: "faith is a supernatural virtue, by which, guided and aided by divine grace, we hold as true what God has revealed, not because we have perceived its intrinsic truth by our reason but because of the authority of God who can neither deceive nor be deceived" (Vatican Council). But full faith is more than the holding as true what God has revealed, it also includes a commitment of the whole person to God. When God speaks to us we are not to respond with our mind alone, but with our whole self. Abraham provides a splendid example of this whole-hearted acceptance of God's word "he to whom the name of Abraham was given, showed faith when he left his home, obediently, for the country which was to be his inheritance; left it without knowing where

his journey would take him" (Heb. 11.8). The man's whole life was changed once God had spoken to him. Similarly when the Lord spoke to Saul on the way to Damascus, that ardent young man replied: "Lord, what wilt thou have me *do*?" (Acts 9:6) and the rest of his life was an *active* response.

Someone may ask at this point: are you making out that we have been brought up for generations on a false notion of faith? We would answer that the catechism answer is correct as far as it goes. It states the truth, but not the whole truth concerning the nature of faith. A more pertinent question would be: How have we come to teach the impoverished or mutilated view of faith? For the answer to this we must look to history, where we find that the circumstances of religious controversy at the time of the Reformation led the theologians to put the emphasis on the intellectual aspect of faith which the reformers denied, and to neglect the personal aspect of self-giving to God which the Reformers exaggerated. From that time onwards the professional theologians and in their wake preachers kept almost exclusively to the intellectual elements of faith such as are defined in our Catechism.

If we look at the Gospels we find that faith is more than an intellectual assent to truth. Our Lord went among men saying "Repent (change your mind and whole attitude) and believe the Gospel." He made it known that the message was inseparable from his own Person; He called for faith in Himself. In the Gospels faith brings about a change in an individual's life; he gives an assent to Christ's teaching and he consents to live the new life Christ had come to give. It is a commitment of the whole self to Christ. A person who gives himself to Christ in this way receives the Father who sent him, thus becoming closely united to the Father and the Son. Faith sets up a *personal relationship with God*.

Happily, in recent years, many theologians having become much more aware of the important part played by the will in the act of faith are abandoning the one-sided view which has prevailed since the sixteenth century and are returning to the full Catholic concept which is drawn from Holy Scripture. The pastoral theologians are recommending us to bring out clearly and strongly the personal commitment involved in faith and yet not to neglect its intellectual character of assent to truths revealed by

God. We must neither oppose the two elements nor neglect one of them, but unite the two. In *What Is Faith?*, one of the "Faith and Fact" books, we see the tendency nowadays in studies on the nature of faith to bring out the personal element. The author, E. Joly, shows that "faith is in an order quite different from that of mere adherence to a rational truth. Our faith is not a submission to a coercive demonstration, but adherence to a Person on whom we rely." We stake our lives on this Person. There are, he points out, some truths which do not affect our life, as, for example, the discovery of an ancient coin; but there are other truths which do have great repercussions on our life, such as the law of gravity. On a higher level, faith involves truths which "engage" our whole being in the ways of God; it is an acceptance of God showing itself in a willingness on our part to be directed by him as he sees fit. This is not an act of the intellect alone, but an act of the intellect and will.

In the light of these recent developments, one can well understand how the very first of the conclusions drawn up at the end of an international Congress on Religious Education held a few years ago, was worded as follows: "Faith is an assent of the intellect, but also a commitment of the whole man. The Catechist and religious educator will therefore have in mind not only their hearers' intellectual assent to the revealed deposit, faithfully transmitted, but also the act of personal response to the call from God."

II. SOME PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES

(1) Catechesis is not simply the imparting of knowledge of revealed truths. Such mere instruction, besides running the easy danger of boring the pupils, will at best lead to formal orthodoxy; it is certainly not enough to lead young people to living the Christian life through prayer, the sacraments and good works. We have painful evidence of this fact in the drifting from religious practice of thousands of children who have been through an eight or ten year course of instruction in Catholic schools.

The catechist who understands the true nature of faith will indeed give instruction; he will hand on and explain the revealed truths which a Christian is expected to know and understand as far as he is able. But he will not stop there. He must be constantly

striving in his teaching to elicit *acts of faith* from his pupils.

An act of faith, be it noted, is not made by the mind alone, but by the mind and will together. It implies both knowledge and love. Just as one cannot love God if one does not know about him, so one cannot really know God unless one already possesses some love for him arising from acquaintanceship and mutual presence. In the words of St. John: "he who does not love, does not know God, for God is love." Moral dispositions are essential to faith and cannot be neglected.

The revealed truths will, therefore, be put forward in a way to move both mind and will. They will be presented as God's Word to us, as a personal invitation to us to live now a life with and like Christ and calling for an active response from us. In this way the teacher will help pupils to make the act of faith. How many of our lapsed Catholics are people who have never made a real act of faith: they have never made a personal and convinced reply to God's speaking!

By continued acts of faith a person cultivates the *life of faith* and this is what we want to aim at above all. For, although faith is one and the same, it has three forms: it is a *knowledge*, which has for its object the truths revealed by God; it is also a *virtue* implanted in the soul at baptism, or as they say in theology, a habit, which calls for exercise in acts because otherwise it becomes atrophied and lifeless; and finally, it is a *life*, the new life which Christ came to give and which consists essentially in knowing and loving God supernaturally. The catechist, therefore, is to deepen and enrich the life of faith by presenting God's Word in such a way that the pupils by dint of repeated acts of faith come to adopt consciously the Christian way of living. They make a lifelong response to God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, and they acquire the attitude of the man "who feels, judges and acts always and consistently in accordance with right reason enlightened by the example and teaching of Jesus Christ." (Pius XI.)

(2) The aim and purpose we have in mind, namely education in full faith, calls for a reconsideration of the *content* of our teaching. It will not be an array of religious truths to be merely known and stored in memory like some furniture in the mind. In catechesis we pick out the essential points of Christian revelation and concentrate on these. These essentials are the truths con-

nected with the history of salvation and the reply we are to make to God's past, present and future work of love in our regard. Creed, sacraments and Christian morality form the essential content of all our religious teaching.

There is room for improvement here. Do we not tend to overload the syllabus with matter which has its rightful place in a seminary course of theology but which is not necessary for young people? With these latter it is not a question of knowing more and more religious truths but of knowing better those relatively few fundamental truths by which we live. In saying this we do not mean that the syllabus should be cut down to a minimum, for we recognize the need to give our pupils an adequate knowledge of their faith which will enable them to defend it and reason intelligently about it with their non-Catholic contemporaries when they leave school. But the main effort should be directed to an even deeper understanding of the central truth, the mystery of Christ.

(3) The fostering and developing of faith suggests the fundamental method to be followed. There are numerous methods of teaching religion; we speak of the Munich Method, the Shields Method, the Bolton Method, Montessori Method, etc., as well as the countless "methods" in the sense of techniques and devices. But no matter what particular method we may prefer there is one which should dominate all. Since the Christian message which we hand on is the Good News of our salvation in Christ, our teaching should certainly be Christ-centred. We must make known the person of Jesus Christ, not simply the events of his life, but the significance of his person and work. The Church will be presented as the Body of Christ, grace as the life of Christ in the soul, the Sacraments as actions of Christ, morality as the imitation of Christ. . . .

In all those various points which are usually treated under the heading of method, such as adaptation to age-group, language, discipline, questioning, memorization, tests, visual aids, activities, etc., the aim we have in view will help us to decide what is to be chosen or rejected.

(4) Finally, but not least important is the *teacher himself*. Besides doctrinal competence and teaching ability he must be a man of faith, showing by his own example what it is to live a life of faith.

Approach To The Act Of Faith

By Rev. E. K. Taylor, C.M.S.

I turn with relish to the positive side of my subject, for shadows are best dispelled by light. Our most useful apologetic is to show the whole truth rather than to defend its details. We will make such demonstration more effective if we know how different aspects of the truth appeal to enquiring minds.

I am not here concerned with the act of faith itself, which is made solely on the authority of God revealing and with the aid of the supernatural gift which so elevates and enlightens the soul that it walks with the assurance of one in the full light of the sun; I am rather concerned with the motives of credibility or the evidences for the truth as considered by souls in complete darkness of unbelief, or in various stages of the twilight of the undeveloped faith of non-Catholic Christians.

The Vatican Council tells us that the motives of credibility are: first, miracles and prophecy; secondly, the Church herself, "the sign raised among the nations" (Isa. xi, 12), One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic; thirdly, the satisfaction which she provides of the heart's yearning for goodness and beauty and the peace which the world cannot understand. The appeal of the first two motives to the intellect is essential; the third, relying as it does on internal evidence is insufficient in itself, but of great value in making the first two more convincing.

The Protestant heresy that faith is an internal religious experience due solely to the direct influence of God, inclined the classical theologians to insist so much on the absolute validity of the external evidence that they neglected the psychology of the would-be believer. Even we, of our generation, came forth from our books inclined to think that with the sword of logic and the shield of the Bible we could beat any fair-minded adversary to his

knees before the altar. We had to learn that no one is convinced by argument, a lesson taught by Newman in his *Grammar of Assent* as long ago as 1870 and developed enthusiastically by French and German theologians in the first half of this century, but neglected so much by us. . . .

In his *Grammar of Assent* Newman examines the workings of the human mind in its arriving at assent. The syllogism never convinced anybody. It is a fly in amber, neat and beautiful, but cut off from reality on all sides, beginning with a first principle that not all will accept and ending with a conclusion that adds nothing to the premise. It unfolds and vindicates truth and is valuable as a training in right thinking, but it is as remote from the world of reality as scales are from a symphony, or foot-drill from a hand to hand engagement with the enemy. In life men are moved by what is real and vivid.

Logic [says Newman] makes but a sorry rhetoric with the multitude. First shoot round corners and you may not despair of converting with a syllogism. . . . After all, man is *not* a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal. He is influenced by what is direct and precise. . . . Life is not long enough for a religion of inferences (*Grammar*, p. 96).

Newman is not, of course, dethroning the intellect, but showing that it is much more subtle and complex than any one of its operations.

Man reaches assent through "the accumulation of probabilities" rather than by any one line of argument. The mind has a detective's power of putting together clues, suggesting probabilities and arriving at absolute conviction. This power Newman calls "the illative sense." Father D'Arcy in his *Nature of Belief* acclaims the theory but quarrels with the artificiality of the term and says it means simply "interpretation," or the "realization" of the meaning of the clues. Newman's example of it is that of

Through the courtesy of *The Clergy Review*, September, 1959. Father Taylor's talk was originally delivered at the fifth National Conference of Convert-Makers in England, sponsored by the Catholic Missionary Society. A condensation.

the farmer who from scores of signs of which he is hardly conscious makes a firm judgment about the weather. All men assent to such reasonings which cannot be proved separately.

Blondel and the Immanentists at the turn of the century made the mistake of dethroning the intellect, saying that the aspirations of the human soul for truth and peace are more powerful motives of credibility than the external signs enumerated by the Vatican Council. Newman is cleared of any such charge, although they claimed him as a supporter. He is concerned with the psychology of the man using his reason in examining the evidence for the Faith. The validity of his theory has been admitted by all modern theologians, who, in accepting it, have developed it and added to its theological content. Roger Aubert in his imposing work *La Problème de l'Acte de Foi* (Louvain 1950) makes a survey of their teaching. There is confirmation of many of their ideas in the letters of students of the Catholic Enquiry Centre Course.

Father Rousselot, lecturer at the *Institut Catholique* de Paris till 1914, sought to develop Newman's philosophy in the light of theology and to apply it to the act of faith of the uneducated man, which, after all, is the ordinary act of faith. The extent of the reading of millions is the sports or fashion columns and short news items in a copiously illustrated newspaper. The man in the street in the face of complex evidence has need of the grace of God to help the natural processes of his intellect long before he receives the gift of faith. After this grace, nothing assists him more in finding the truth than his innate love of the good and the beautiful, particularly as seen reflected in the person of one whom he loves.

The German Jesuit, Father Przywara, sees in the use of Newman's "illative sense" the explanation of many religious experiences. The mind, aided by grace, has been making rapid inferences for a long time and realizes their implications with such thrilling suddenness that it is like an illumination. "The penny drops" as we say. The final penny gets the right permutation and all the pent-up pennies of months and years come tumbling into the jackpot.

Karl Adam attaches great importance to the congregation of the worshipping Church in the development of the prospective convert's faith. The first Christians received the

Holy Ghost within the ecclesiastical community and the faith of the Catholic child develops within the family of the parish. There too the non-Catholic is often brought to his encounter with the living God. Karl Adam writes eloquently of the value of religious experiences. Pentecost, he says, is constantly being repeated in the Church. Special occasions such as Midnight Masses, processions, First Communion celebrations and, above all, parish missions, are powerful influences in the development of the faith of both Catholics and non-Catholics.

Thus men are drawn to the truth by as many ways as there are points of the compass. They are convinced more by a thousand clues suggesting probabilities than a clear line of argument, more by what they see and hear than by what they read, and their thinking can never be isolated from their emotional experiences. The grace of God helps the well-disposed enquirer in his search long before the gift of faith is given.

These contentions are borne out by the letters we receive.* To every quotation given in illustration of these points could be added a dozen more.

LOVE AND EXAMPLE

Father Rousselot's stress on the importance of love in the approach to the faith is justified by the experience of all parochial clergy and is well illustrated in our letters. The majority of converts are attracted to the Faith by seeing its beauty reflected in the life of one they love and longing to share in what is obviously a joyful experience. A girl of twenty writes: "When I am at Mass, particularly at the elevation of the Host, I have noticed how much it means to my young man (and others round about), but to me the priest is just lifting something in the air; I never really feel God's presence. This all makes me rather disappointed and unhappy (jealous sometimes too)."

That girl, secretly studying the face of her lover bowed in adoration, is representative of many. Often it is the sharing of pain in love that brings the soul near to God. The atheistic wife of a lapsed Catholic at death's door sees him long for the priest and rejoice at absolution, goes with him to Lourdes and is edified by his devotion, and feels the real-

* Letters received as a result of the Home Study Correspondence Course conducted by the Catholic Missionary Society of England.

ity of his Faith when he meets death calmly and peacefully. "I was with him when he died, and the feeling I had at that moment of his death was all the proof I need of everlasting life."

Next to love of man for women is the love of parents for children. A father writes: "There is a blank in my life. I stay at home on Sunday mornings and help with odd jobs in the house. My wife and children go to Mass. What is it that they bring back, Father, that I have not got?" There is a man whose daughter went to a convent school and his formerly cynical wife began to be attracted to the Faith which seemed so beautiful to the child. He writes: "Frankly, the reason behind my initial enquiry stemmed from my desire to protect my daughter from Catholic influences." A Baptist with three unbaptized children seeks to find out if he is depriving them of anything, and having learned to believe has his whole family baptized. Often non-Catholic parents of Catholic children seek information to help them in the answering of questions and are themselves convinced.

The power of good example in religion is inestimable. Our brethren in the priesthood throughout the country attract many souls to the Church without realizing it. The pagan wife of a lapsed Catholic brings him and his four children to the Church because of her admiration for the zeal of the parish priest who visited her so often. The hospital visiting of priests has amazing effects on people at a time when they are in need of the comforts of religion. This example is typical of many: "Every day the Catholic priest came round the hospital visiting the R. C. patients and the Sister accompanied him. This day he stopped at my window and just smiled, and a few days later he saw me sitting outside on a garden seat. He came over to me and said 'I am so glad you are getting better. God bless you.' I cannot tell you how much his words meant and particularly his manner." Later came the moment of realization when, as described by Father Przywara, the accumulated inferences assumed the force of an illumination. She writes: "I kept walking round the kitchen with one thought running through my brain 'You must find the priest who visits at X. Isolation Hospital.' At length I left everything, put on my hat and went round to St. Mary's Presbytery."

Nuns teaching non-Catholic children at

convent schools lead many parents to a study of the Faith. Here is a typical remark: "Both my husband and I have learned to love the nuns. They, more than anybody, have inspired my interest in the Catholic Faith." But the example of good Catholics everywhere is a powerful influence. A semi-literate woman writes of her neighbors: "I watched them nearly every morning of my married life, nineteen years, going to morning Mass. . . . How they watch their daughter's three children while their daughter and their son-in-law go to Mass Sunday morning." Perhaps there are many wistful faces hidden behind front-room curtains at Mass time on Sunday mornings. And here is a graphic account of how one piece of example worked powerfully for fifteen years. A Welshman writes of a wartime experience in Holland: "I heard someone coming along the road, all in the snow and bitter cold. I had to halt the person as was usual those days and still remember being told by the two children and a young girl in her teens that they were on the way to Mass. It made me think a lot."

Even the intellectuals are convinced more by persons than ideas. Jacques Maritain and his future wife, Raissa Oumansoff, were first attracted to the Faith by the holiness of the household of Léon Bloy.

Many letters confirm Karl Adam's ideas of the importance both of the worshipping congregation and of religious experiences. The simply dignity of the Mass is impressive, much more so if there is a friend to whisper a few words of explanation. But the crowds of ordinary people in unself-conscious and quiet adoration such as is not seen in any other place, fill the observer with wonder and awe, and make him long to share in this joyful experience.

LITURGY AND DEVOTION

One terrified as a child by revivalist religion speaks of seeing the Mass on television: "I did not find it strange, only quiet and holy, and all the faces seemed so happy and peaceful." A mother writes of the crowds: "It is something quite outside the experience of anyone who has never been to a Catholic church before and very wonderful. . . . There were children there each time, with their mothers, which is very wonderful." The unity in Catholicity of the congregation often impresses. One man says that this gathering of all types, dresses, degrees

of people, but each quite definitely sharing in something is the finest proof he knows of the claims of the Catholic Church. A Quaker, prominent in public life and active in ecumenical work, was convinced of the Church's claim by finding the prayer of quiet at Mass. "Once having gone to Mass I could no longer take a detached view. The Mass was for me the most joyful experience I have ever had! Occasionally, in a truly 'gathered' Quaker meeting the sense of the living Presence has been real—but this was true every time I went to Mass."

The culmination of a long enquiry comes not rarely in a religious experience before the Blessed Sacrament or at Mass. A very sane young man writes: "At Mass last Sunday, just before and during Communion for those fortunate people who may take it, I nearly broke down. I felt my heart was ready to burst. If I could have been alone, I would have flung myself down and wept. Never have I had such an experience. I do not think it was emotionalism. I felt that all my barriers had broken down and I felt that I had come home."

We feel the "real absence" in Protestant churches. Many correspondents tell how they are awed by a sense of the Real Presence—what one person calls "the living silence." One young man tells how the sanctuary lamp is an aid to contemplation.

Human wisdom might suggest that statues of the Sacred Heart, medals, Rosary beads, are best left unmentioned until the fish is well hooked. In fact, these help to convince many, and many have a longing for our Blessed Lady. One writes: "I have always had a sneaking regard for our Lady, but, because of the teaching of my church, I have felt it to be wrong. . . . It is with relief that I now find I can pray to her and not be doing wrong."

The newspaper advertisements which have had the greatest effect have been the ones depicting the more controversial and characteristic elements of the Catholic Faith—the Mass, the Rosary (associated with our Blessed Lady) and the Pope.

So, the marks of the Church are seen in the lives and the worship of the Catholic people and are appraised by the intellect often encouraged by love and religious experiences and always aided by grace. But all these things have to be brought into perspective by a more or less systematic study of the Catholic Church. This is the thing that so many millions lack. At some point

in these vague searchings comes suddenly a Press advertisement with a picture that rings a bell in the mind of the seeker, or a friend offers a card which is an application for the Catholic Enquiry Centre Course and there is immediately direction and purpose in the search for truth.

Bishop Dwyer's twenty-one leaflets bring things into perspective with overwhelming effect. The human soul is moulded in such a way that Christian truth fits it perfectly, and most who study it in these clear pages illuminated with apt examples, welcome it with wondering joy. Particularly remarkable is the number of teen-agers who, without revealing their age, study the Course and are swept off their feet with enthusiasm. Some who come to scoff are terrified when the stones of their ignorance are kicked over and the prejudices scurry like vermin from the light. Some are convinced and put off the day of decision. Many are confirmed in their belief of the positive aspects of their Protestantism and are satisfied to stay as they are. All are enlightened. But even for those who are ultimately convinced the time of full sunrise is yet to come.

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GUIDE

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Guide Lights

The last political campaign will doubtless inspire numerous major research projects. But some immediate reactions by competent observers have their own special value. One conclusion reached by many Catholic editors was voiced by Father Ready of *Ave Maria*:

"The next four years will be demanding ones for American Catholics. I'm not talking about political problems. I'm talking about the demands that will be made on you for information about your religion. Mr. Kennedy's administration will occasion a continuing barrage of questions from our non-Catholic friends. Without any malice, with a sincere desire for information, your non-Catholic neighbors will look at the actions of the President and ask: 'What does your Church say about this?' . . .

"Today American Catholics will have to be better informed about the teachings of their religion than any previous generation was—or they will be held responsible for their ignorance."

Here are perceptive analyses by noted representatives of America's three largest religious groups:

PROTESTANT JOURNAL . . .

The recent presidential election campaign "may affect deeply the inner evolution of Catholicism and its cultural role in America," according to the current issue of *Christianity and Crisis*, a bi-weekly Protestant journal of opinion. An editorial entitled "What the Campaign Did to Religion" by Roger L. Shinn declared that until the campaign Americans had never received so complete an education in Roman Catholic beliefs and practices—"including some of its internal struggles. Millions, who never before have done so," the editorial said, "now think of Catholicism in terms of an intelligent leader, thoroughly committed to religious liberty and separation of Church and State."

Noting the evolution of Catholic thought with regard to modern political liberalism and democracy, the editorial commented: "If it can truthfully be said that Roman Catholicism (like all big institutions) contains sharply conflicting beliefs, it can now be said also that the political campaign has strengthened the liberal forces." The editorial predicted that the response of American Catholic leaders to the action of the Puerto Rico bishops in prohibiting the island's Catholics from voting for Governor Luis Munoz Marin also would affect the future of Roman Catholicism.

The campaign, the editorial asserted, brought out "the worst and the best in the vast collection of American voices that are loosely called Protestant." Describing campaign prejudice as "malicious" and "unreasoning," the editorial added: "The logic of some groups became most absurd when preachers invoked clerical authority to tell their congregations to vote against Kennedy, because priests might influence him. 'A happier story,'" it said, "was the forthright stand of Protestants who called for elimination of religious prejudice from the campaign."

A JEWISH VIEW . . .

The recent presidential campaign showed that religious bigotry in the United States is far from dead, David Danzig, program director of the American Jewish Committee, warned. Danzig predicted that "religious conflicts in America will grow."

"Honest difference between religious groups is no threat to national peace," he said. But what could disturb the country's harmony is "a factor often present in religious conflict—prejudice, religious bigotry."

"Anti-Catholicism, anti-Semitism and the bigoted attacks of Protestant fundamentalists upon Protestant conservatism were very evident in the recent campaign," he said. Danzig said religious conflict today expresses itself "not in theological differences but in social issues." He cited the legal battles over Sunday observance laws, Federal aid to private schools, birth control legislation, and gambling and liquor laws among "the more conspicuous expressions of religious conflict" in the U. S.

"There is considerable conflict," he added, "which also arises out of confusion and ignorance." To understand the conflicts, he continued, it is necessary to understand that "it is in the nature of American pluralism that religious groups should seek to win the whole community to their values, their goal being to make their values and beliefs identical with those of the entire society." Religious pluralism, he emphasized, is not to be confused with "mere tolerance or religious co-existence, wherein neither religious group seeks to change the value of the other or of the larger society."

"America's religious groups," Danzig said, "are not threatened by the competition and conflicts among them, but by the anti-religious forces around them, among which bigotry must be recognized as outstanding."

A CATHOLIC VIEW . . .

American Protestants have mortally wounded the so-called religious issue, according to Msgr. Francis J. Lally, editor of the Boston arch-diocesan newspaper, the *Pilot*. Commenting on the election as President of Sen. John F. Kennedy, he said: "The posture of Protestants, taken in the wide dispersion, is surely a very heartening picture. Plainly the mass of Protestants considered the religious issue at least a secondary one—and this even in some places where their religious leaders were openly exploiting religious differences."

"Kennedy was doubtless correct when he said he buried the religious issue in the hills of West Virginia. He might have added that he preached its eulogy in Houston and that the American people raised a massive monument over its grave on Tuesday," he said. Monsignor Lally's references were to the May 10th Democratic primary in heavily Protestant West Virginia, which Mr. Kennedy won, and to his appearance in September before a group of Protestant ministers in Houston, Tex., when he repeated his support of separation of Church and State and of religious freedom.

The priest-editor spoke at a symposium for Chicago-area priests on the "Priest in the Modern World."

Monsignor Lally said he does not expect the religious issue to disappear. But "at least as a political issue," he said, "it has been mortally wounded, and on more than anyone else credit for this lies in the impressive and unpredicted response of American Protestants. The election just ended and so closely contested proved beyond doubt that the religious climate of America has made steady and noticeable improvement during the last decades. This is not because a candidate who is a Catholic was elected President but because the voting pattern that appeared was not along religious lines," he said.

Analyzing the Kennedy victory, Monsignor Lally observed: "Someone will surely say that it was the Catholic vote, presumably cast on religious grounds, that gave Senator Kennedy the victory. This is only partly true; Kennedy or any other Democratic candidate had a right to expect a large measure of support from the urban centers, traditionally Democratic strongholds. Moreover, the candidate was also an easterner which may have made its influence felt. "Add to all of this the fact that even for Catholic voters there were factors beside religion heavily at work, and the religious influence itself must appear quite small indeed.

"Too, important social and sociological forces at work among Catholics were, first, the understandable reaction of a sensitive minority to offensive attacks on religion and patriotism, and secondly, the importance of the office of the president as a 'status symbol' for a group often characterized as hyphenated-Americans or even, 'foreigners.'" Monsignor Lally acknowledged that there were Catholics who voted for the winning candidate simply because he was a Catholic. But others voted against the candidate for the same reason, he noted.

Work remains to be done in intergroup relations. Monsignor Lally told his audience, "but what happened this week indicates that the little known and often despised efforts of many men of good will over the last decade has paid off in an improved national climate of human relations. Now that we clearly see that progress is possible, let us continue to go forward," he urged.

READING I'VE LIKED . . .

The Conversion of St. Augustine. Romano Guardini. \$3.95. The Newman Press. This is a selection of the Catholic Book Club. Excellent on various psychological aspects of Augustine's religious development.

Roman Catholicism and the American Way of Life. Edited by Thomas T. McAvoy, C.S.C. \$4.50. University of Notre Dame Press. Papers read at two symposia held at Notre Dame. Specialists like Will Herberg, Joseph H. Fichter, S.J., and others discuss the general position of Catholics in the U. S. and factors that affect the status of the Catholic minority in our nation.

An American Dialogue. Robert McAfee Brown and Gustave Weigel, S.J. \$2.95. Doubleday and Company. A Protestant looks at Catholicism and a Catholic looks at Protestantism. Possibly the best book yet on the growing inter-faith dialogue now engaging religious thinkers in the U. S.

A Handbook of the Liturgy. Rudolph Peil. \$5.95. Herder and Herder. Particularly valuable for the convert-maker since the author writes especially for pastors and catechists. It is sufficiently complete, illuminating and brief.

Two other outstanding books on the liturgy deserve special attention. *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, by John H. Miller, C.S.C. (Fides Publishers. \$6.00). *Liturgy and the Missions*, edited by Johannes Hofinger, S.J., provides all 27 papers delivered at the Nimejen convention last year. No book to my knowledge says so much—and so well—about the relations of a living liturgy and the world's conversion.

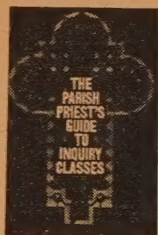
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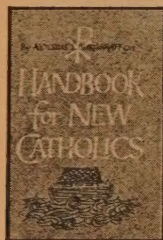
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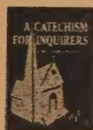
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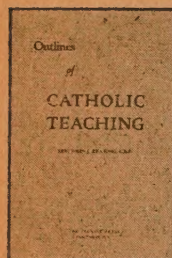
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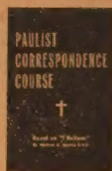
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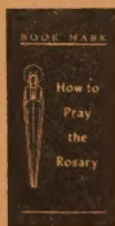
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